ERCS Virtual AGM 2026
Minutes of the virtual sixth AGM (draft)
Held on Tuesday 6 October 2026, 6 – 7.15pm

Present: 42 members (online via zoom)

Trustees: Deborah Long – Vice-chair, Julie Christie – Treasurer, Kevin Dunion, Jim Jarvie, Aedán Smith.

Ordinary members: there were 37 ordinary members including Associates.

Apologies: there were apologies from 4 trustees: Lloyd Austin, Pippa Scott, Tom Ballantine, Jamie Whittle; and 9 ordinary members including Associates.

Staff: Shivali Fifield, Jack Withy, Ben Christman, Kate Smith, Cornell Hanxomphou, Julia Leino, Benji Brown, Zoë Molloy.

AGM Business

1. Chair's welcome

Deborah (ERCS Vice-chair), standing in for Lloyd as Chair, welcomed everyone to the sixth AGM of the Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland and confirmed that the meeting was quorate (10% of membership). ERCS now has 221 members compared with 204 last year.

Deborah introduced the trustees and staff and thanked them for another very productive year.

2. Approval of minutes 8 October 2025

The minutes for the virtual fifth AGM held on 8 October 2025 (paper 1) were approved with no amendments.

3. Annual report & financial statements for the period ended 31 March 2026

- Chair's Report

Deborah noted the main achievements of the year which are detailed in the Trustees' Report accompanying the financial statements. She highlighted how ERCS continues to build its reputation and trusted outputs across its four areas of work, and noted key developments including working with community partners to launch the Clean up Scotland's Sewage campaign, highlighting concerns about sewage sludge spreading on agricultural land, and the establishment of ERCS Legal Ltd.

Deborah thanked everyone who has made these achievements possible including ERCS's funders, the staff team and fellow trustees.

- Treasurer's summary

Julie gave a summary of ERCS's finances for the accounting period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, as outlined in paper 2.

As in previous years, the charity's finances only required an independent examination, rather than a full audit.

In summary, ERCS's finances for this accounting period were income £439,062, expenditure £467,263 and an operating deficit £28,201.

Julie noted that this was the first year ERCS ended with an operating deficit and the accounts detail ERCS's increased running costs which means that we are working to a deficit budget in this financial year as well. This is very similar to many third sector organisations.

ERCS had unrestricted reserves of £309,995 as of 31 March 2026. This was higher than the target level set by the Trustees, which was to hold unrestricted reserves equal to three months' salary costs and 6 months' rent (i.e. £112,000).

However, much of ERCS's current grant funding from trusts and foundations is due to end next financial year. The board reviews ERCS's fundraising strategy every six months which details how ERCS will seek to diversify income with a mixed portfolio of grants from trusts and foundations, proactive engagement with members and supporters for individual donations and legacies, as well as legal aid income from the law firm.

- Consideration of the annual accounts 2025 - 26

Julie asked if members had any questions on the accounts as presented in paper 3.

There was a question about whether ERCS (SCIO) or ERCS Legal Ltd were paying the salaries for the law service. Julie confirmed that the ERCS (SCIO) paid for all the costs of the law firm including salaries.

There were several questions in the zoom chat about how members could support fundraising.

Members in the zoom chat thanked Julie for her work as treasurer and it was agreed that attendees had given the accounts their consideration.

Julie advised the meeting that the accounts would be approved by the Board directly following the AGM.

The approved accounts will be sent to the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) and will also be available on ERCS's website.

- Consideration of ERCS Legal Ltd accounts 2025 - 26

Julie gave a summary of ERCS Legal Ltd's finances for the accounting period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, as outlined in paper 3a.

ERCS established ERCS Legal Ltd to operate a law practice unit regulated by the Law Society of Scotland. The law firm is registered with Companies House

(SC834081) as a private company limited by guarantee without share capital with a sole director, Ben Christman the principal solicitor.

ERCS provides the governance, salaries and operating costs for the law firm.

ERCS Legal Ltd has two accounts: one for holding client money for legal representation, and the other as the business account. The annual accounts show that ERCS Legal Ltd was holding £4,796 at 31 March 2026. This comprised of £3,840 held in the client money account and £956 in the office account.

4. Election of trustees

Deborah introduced paper 5 which gives the register of trustees and schedule of retirement; and ERCS's Constitution clauses on election, appointment, retiral and re-election.

- Scottish Environment LINK's nominated trustees

Scottish Environment LINK's Governance Group have nominated Deborah Long and Aedán Smith to continue to be their representatives on the ERCS Board.

- Schedule of retirement

As Grainne McGinn has retired and vacated office, only two other trustees need to stand for re-election at the 2026 AGM: Julie Christie and Thomas Ballantine.

- Member nominations of new trustees

The Board received no member nominations for new trustees.

- Resolution for the election of trustees

Paper 4 provides short biographies and statements from Julie Christie – who spoke to her statement, and Thomas Ballantine seeking re-election at the 2026 AGM.

Members were asked to vote for each person individually via the zoom voting application.

The resolution to elect Julie Christie and Thomas Ballantine was passed by a majority vote with no votes against.

Deborah encouraged any participants who wanted to become a trustee in the future to contact Shivali for a discussion on what the role entails and how best to get involved at an early stage.

The appointment of office bearers will be decided at the Board meeting directly following the AGM.

5. Presentation on ERCS's work during this period. Shivali Fifield, chief officer

The ERCS team gave a presentation on their areas of work: rights awareness, law service, litigation and advocacy. This included their key achievements and what they are most looking forward to in the coming year.

There were no direct questions but members congratulated the team on their presentations and achievements in the zoom chat.

Deborah thanked the staff team and asked members to contact Shivali for any questions or information.

6. Thanks and close

There being no further business, the Annual General Meeting closed at 7:25pm.